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THE PSYCHOLOGY OF PLANNING

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THE PSYCHOLOGY OF PLANNING

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The aim of this paper is to outline the basic factors of planning. We are interested in various types and levels of forethought. By our analysis the psychologist can trace development of planned thinking especially about future needs from the individual to the most complicated group level. This description of types of planning is a contribution to the social psychology of thinking.

Planning and thinking. Blue prints for later action are set up in the course of planning. Planning is controlled thinking about the future. It takes place under conditions of reverie, everyday situations, or tension and crisis. It means going in new directions. It establishes and changes quotas, revises levels and rates of output. It is definitely guided by certain dominant economic, political, cultural and personal factors. It is not simply an addition of memories and perceptions. Often in the contemplation of future possibilities, new shapes, patterns, and tendencies emerge. Planners carve out new problems and often redirect our objectives.

In the literature on planning, factors influencing planning are said to be insight, sagacity, inventiveness, prudence, independent judgment and criticism, intelligence, speed and certain ethical considerations such as honesty and personal initiative directed towards social ends.

Planning patterns may be imaginative and emotional. In a psychological analysis of a planning operation account must be taken of imaginative factors. Planning aptitude is measured by the production of new patterns, new tasks, new techniques, etc. In daydreaming the future is shaped by a predominantly subjective attitude. Daydreams disregard divergence of reasonable expectancy from sheer fantasy. The planner may imaginatively experiment with new slants about probable situations. Utopias as patterns of thought descriptive of the future may be prophetic and fantastic but Utopias are not practicable plans.

As thinking about the future, planning is an operation to be weighted in terms of logical and scientific criteria as well as in terms of creative and imaginative values.

Planning and prediction. Prediction as description of probable events is based on experimentation or observation under controlled circumstances. It is most important for careful planning. In anticipation of results of a plan changes in steps for its execution may be made to advantage. There is no such thing as actual experience of the future in planning or prediction. There can be no direct contact with a future situation. There is only reference to the future.

Predictions influence acceptance or rejection of a plan. Industry may operate according to a schedule of output based on predic-

tion of future production and consumption. Often, election or public opinion polls may serve as a factor in the fate of a plan. Anticipation of basic needs is a preliminary part of effective planning.

Personnel in planning. In earlier stages of a plan an originality of outlook is of primary importance. Routine execution of a plan depends on practical, technical ability. Planners become sensitive to fluctuations in administrative policies and public demand.

Short range planners are in close touch with current events and have access to pertinent information. Quick thinking, alertness to critical situations and recommendation of plans for rapid adjustment are characteristic requirements for this type of planner. Long range planners take in broader segments of the past and are concerned with a longer future period. Those engaged in both short and long term planning must be flexible in their outlook.

No planning can be well designed without experts. Training of experts is necessary to ensure ample supply of personnel for planning.

Short range and long range planning. A short range plan covers the immediate future. Objectives of a long term plan extend over a longer period. Short term objectives are concrete and detailed but long term ones are more general and are timed according to a schedule of priorities. Short term plans specify objectives and means for their attainment; long term plans allow for technological improvement or revised administrative procedure. Budgetary arrangements are specifically limited for the short term plan and are only generally foreshadowed in the long term plan. Short term propaganda is rapidly carried on over wide areas. This is not usually the case for the long run plan. Tests of constitutionality are anticipated only in legislation for a long term, as courts may disrupt a long term plan.

Personal planning. One plans for himself most of the time to a certain degree. One may also take an interest in plans of others. Personal planning may be colored by elements of self-reliance, by an urge to attain certain goals. Lack of opportunities may cut short a planned career. Those who fail to fulfill an early promise are usually frustrated by lack of means.

Planning of unemployed is quite complicated by factors such as age, sex, vocation, private employment opportunities, project and other relief work opportunities, family life, home environment, and so on. Unemployed also tend to range from planlessness to active planning. Despite lack of assurance about employment they make plans varying from a random, casual search to a systematic search for work. Where employment is on a day to day, shape-up basis, plans are limited diurnally.

National planning. Planning of public works was intensified as an attempt to neutralize economic crisis and to safeguard and accelerate recovery. It tried to coordinate local, state and national

programs after a survey of vital needs of various regions. Social security and industrial relations programs were created by trial and error, by systematic study, by experts' counsel, and by short and long range legislation. Peacetime planning is now embodied in the national defense program. In national planning we come across various stages ranging from no-plan to plan, and problems of objectives, attitudes, personnel, public opinion and participation.

International planning. International law as a master plan for preservation of peace among nations never succeeded. Brierly considered "human foresight too limited . . . so that situations perpetually arise which fall outside all rules already formulated." Adequate international planning failed, however, not because of any limitations in foresight but on account of the failure to make careful preparations for contingencies. Lauterpacht described the political unwillingness to renounce all resort to war and to set up international tribunals capable of functioning with impartial judgment without restraint of precedent or coercion.

Treaties are for the short or long run and are makeshift or mature programs for relations among nations. A foreign policy is the nation's master plan for international relations. It leads to critical defensive or offensive or cooperative measures. A country without an integrated or continuous foreign policy wavers from episode to episode without a definite plan.

Technological planning. All research is planned up to a certain point: investigations are usually under the supervision of an expert and are related to certain problems. Lack of funds often restricts research. Planning of science and invention implies a study of the needs of the community. No general plan has as yet guided research. International congresses have achieved a moderate integration of research. Laboratories scattered over the world have as yet to synchronize their endeavors. Planning need not hamper original scientists but routine work often prevents creative individuals from undertaking work of interest.

Types of planning. Psychological analysis of various types of planning is an integral part of the psychology of thinking. All kinds of plans are of interest since they have certain common and differentiating aspects.

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